

MARCH 2018



# CASE STUDY

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CHAPEL HILL CHRISTIAN (SOUTH CAMPUS), AKRON, OHIO

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## Heaven Sent— The Story of One School's Literacy Adoption

"Families throughout our community are reading less. Busy lives and electronic devices take time away from book reading, and it is leading to a decline in reading motivation." This was the problem Linda Wise, principal of Chapel Hill Christian South Campus in Akron, Ohio wanted to solve as she approached a new literacy adoption. Her charge? To increase a love of reading in her students, while providing rigorous, quality instruction. To Linda, this meant finding a program that centers on Christian values and inspires life long reading.

"We were amazed at how difficult the task was," explains Linda. "While we had found a program that met the needs of K-2, the *Superkids Program*, we were at a stand-still searching for something for grades 3-6. By referral, we happened upon the *Read Side By Side Reading Program*, and found the answer to our prayers."

### A Decision Is Made

After a year-long adoption process, both Chapel Hill campuses (north and south) adopted the *Superkids Reading Program*, published by Zaner-Bloser Inc., and the *Read Side By Side Reading Program*, published by Read Side By Side Publications LLC. They are now in the sixth month of using these programs, and the staff couldn't be more excited with the committee's decision.

### Two Programs Working Side By Side

The two programs, while written by different authors and published by different curriculum companies, seem to have been made for each other. Both programs increase students' confidence and motivation to read through systematic instruction and high-interest texts. "At first, teachers were apprehensive because of the scripted lesson plans in both programs. They were used to using their own resources, largely supplementing our previous programs. But the scripted lessons give them a new sense of confidence and lift the burden of lesson planning. They are finding ways to bring in their own autonomy without sacrificing the structure of the lessons," explains Linda.



### **A Visit to the School**

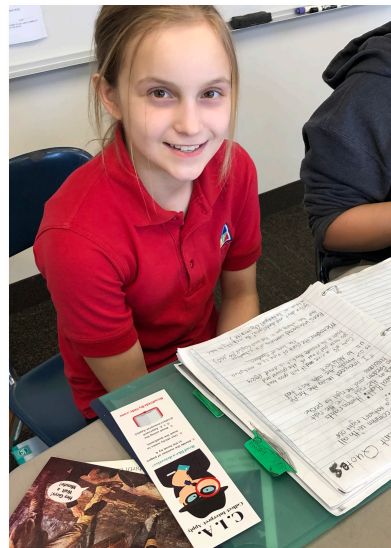
On a recent visit to the north campus, Sarah Collinge, author of the *Read Side By Side Program*, witnesses the *Superkids Reading Program* in action in Stephanie Marroquin's second grade classroom. Students are engaged in the lesson, following along with the teacher as she reads the next chapter in the *Superkids* story. They are eager to learn what will happen when the main character forgets to do his homework. After reading together, they are each matched to a chapter book—a below level, on level, or above level title. The teacher provides support through book club lessons, but the students are, for the most part, independent. This transfer of training is familiar to Collinge who uses the same read-aloud/book club approach in the *Read Side By Side Reading Program*. She feels confident that these second grade readers will be able to make the transition to her program for grades three through six with ease. "When I observe lessons in the second and third grade classrooms, I hear common language being used despite the fact that they are using different programs. Students are identifying story elements, talking about the author's message, and referring to evidence from the text in both programs," says Lisa Meyer, the reading specialist who works in classrooms K-6.

### **Text Selection in the Programs**

The books in both programs are selected for their merit and the values they promote. Students learn the themes of family, friendship, forgiveness, and right and wrong. They feel a connection to the characters in each story, and begin to make connections across texts, a skill the Common Core State Standards require. "My students love the books in the program. Everyday they beg to keep reading. Many students read the next books in the series," shares fourth grade teacher, Tina Toedt.

Nonfiction reading is woven into both programs through a magazine for K-2, and online articles and diverse media for grades 3-6. Parents report students coming home with facts to share about everything from beetles, to bullies, to American history. A highlight for sixth grade students is watching the PBS documentary "Surviving the Dust Bowl" during their nonfiction study of *Children of the Dust Bowl* by Jerry Stanley. "My students had no idea that the dust storms and the Great Depression had happened in our history. They were enthralled by this true-life story. Tears were shed," shares sixth grade teacher, Dean Barrett who has taught at Chapel Hill Christian for 41 years.

In a fifth grade classroom, Kristina Robertson guides her students through the book *Chains*, by Laurie Halse Anderson. Students are paying attention to Anderson's use of metaphor to bring the reader to her message. "I think the author is trying to tell us that everyone has scars, but sometimes we just can't see them," shares one student. "I think the author wants us to feel empathy for people who may be going through a difficult time, like the loss of a loved one." Several students in the classroom already have plans to continue reading the other books in the series.



A fifth grader in the *Read Side by Side Reading Program* working on nonfiction reading during book clubs.

### **The Results**

Since adopting the *Superkids Reading Program* for K-2, and the *Read Side by Side Reading Program* for 3-6, the literacy specialist has witnessed a change in student ability. "The lowest students are performing much higher than before. They are more confident readers because the skills have been explicitly and systematically taught. They can't wait for reading time when they get to meet the next *Superkid* or arrive at the turning point in their novel."

Most exciting is the way the staff has embraced the new reading adoption. "Our staff loves each of the reading programs. They love the scripted lessons and the high level of student engagement. They are passionate about teaching, and believe they are doing a good job!" And they are!

Only six months into the program, Chapel Hill Christian South Campus is already showing growth on the Star Renaissance Assessment, given three times a year to students in grades 1-5. Students are averaging 8 months of growth in six months time. Students love reading more than ever!

Administrator and Pastor, John Wilson comments, "Prayer had been a part of the process of the year-long literacy adoption committee and God answered our prayers in an amazing way."

For more information on the Superkids Reading Program for K-2, published by Zaner-Bloser Inc. contact [superkids@zaner-bloser.com](mailto:superkids@zaner-bloser.com) or visit <https://www.superkidsreading.com>.

For more information about the Read Side By Side Reading Program for 3-6, published by Read Side By Side LLC. contact [info@readsidebyside.com](mailto:info@readsidebyside.com) or visit <https://www.readsidebyside.com>.